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Diana T Fritz 03/20/2007 05:23:23 PM From DB/Inbox: Search Results

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SIPDIS  
TELEGRAM

September 30, 2003

To: No Action Addressee  
Action: Unknown  
From: AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI (ABU DHABI 4396 - UNKNOWN)  
TAGS: PREL, OIIP, KPAO  
Captions: None  
Subject: WITH THE ARAB WORLD WATCHING, USG AND IRAQI OFFICIALS  
DELIVER A STRONG MESSAGE AT THE IMF/WORLD BANK  
CONFERENCE  
Ref: None

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UNCLAS ABU DHABI 04396

SIPDIS  
CXABU:  
ACTION: PAO  
INFO: ECON AMB POL DCM  
Laser1:  
ACTION: PAO

DISSEMINATION: PAO  
CHARGE: PROG

APPROVED: AMB:MMWAHBA  
DRAFTED: PAO:TPONCE  
CLEARED: PAO:HOLSIN-WINDECKER; ECON:OJOHN

VZCZCADI133  
OO RUEHC RUEKJCS RUEHXX RUEHLO RHRMDAB RUCJACC  
DE RUEHAD #4396/01 2730629  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
O 300629Z SEP 03  
FM AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1875  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE  
INFO RUEHXX/ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE  
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 0720  
RHRMDAB/COMUSNAVCENT  
RUCJACC/USCINCENT MACDILL AFB FL//CCPA//

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 ABU DHABI 004396

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STATE FOR E; EB/IVP/ODS; NEA/ARP; NEA/PPD; NEA/P;  
NEA/NGA; NEA/FO; PA; INR/NESA; IIP/G/NEA-SA  
WHITE HOUSE FOR PRESS OFFICE; NSC  
SECDEF FOR OASD/PA  
USCINCENT FOR POLAD  
LONDON FOR GOLDRICH, MOC (MHAMBLEY);

E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [OIIP](#) [KPAO](#) [TC](#)  
SUBJECT: WITH THE ARAB WORLD WATCHING, USG AND IRAQI  
OFFICIALS DELIVER A STRONG MESSAGE AT THE IMF/WORLD BANK  
CONFERENCE

¶1. SUMMARY: DURING THE DUBAI 2003 INTERNATIONAL MONETARY  
FUND (IMF) AND WORLD BANK (WB) ANNUAL MEETINGS, THE PUBLIC  
AFFAIRS SECTION (PA) AT THE US EMBASSY IN ABU DHABI WORKED

WITH USG, COALITION PROVISIONAL AUTHORITY (CPA), AND IRAQI OFFICIALS TO ENGAGE THE PRESS ON RECONSTRUCTION ISSUES IN IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN. THE MEDIA WERE CLEARLY FOCUSED ON IRAQ, AND, WITH PA ABU DHABI ASSISTANCE, IRAQI GOVERNING COUNCIL (IGC) MEMBER DR. ADIL ABDUL MEHDI AND THE INTERIM MINISTERS ENGAGED THE ARAB AND INTERNATIONAL MEDIA TO ADDRESS MANY ISSUES. AS THE ARAB WORLD WATCHED, USG AND IRAQI OFFICIALS SPREAD THE WORD THAT THE TIME FOR BUILDING IRAQ'S FUTURE IS NOW. END SUMMARY.

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A FOCUS ON IRAQ  
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¶2. THE 2003 IMF/WB MEETINGS SAW A LARGE ARAB AND INTERNATIONAL MEDIA TURNOUT, AND THE UAE GOVERNMENT HAD PREPARED THE DUBAI INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION CENTER (DICC) WELL WITH A SPACIOUS PRESS CENTER COMPLETE WITH BRIEFING ROOMS, TRANSLATION SERVICES, VIDEO EDITING ROOMS, AND LIVE FEEDS TO MOST EVENTS. CNN, AP, REUTERS, BBC, DOW JONES, BLOOMBERG, WALL STREET JOURNAL, NY TIMES, AND SIMILAR MEDIA ATTENDED EN MASSE. NOT TO BE OUTDONE, ARAB MEDIA INCLUDED ABU DHABI TV, AL JAZEERA, AL HAYAT, LBC, AL SHARQ AL AWSAT, DUBAI TV, AL ARABIYA, CNBC ARABIYA, CNN ARABIYA, AND LOCAL UAE MEDIA.

¶3. FROM THE START, THE FOCUS WAS IRAQ. DURING AN IMF BRIEFING ON DEVELOPMENT IN THE MIDDLE EAST, THE PRESS FOCUSED THEIR QUESTIONS ON THE IMF'S YET-UNDELIVERED ASSESSMENTS OF IRAQ'S RECONSTRUCTION. DESPITE IMF CRITICISM OF THE REGION'S REGIMES AND CALLS FOR A "NEW SOCIAL CONTRACT" BETWEEN GOVERNMENTS AND PEOPLES, JOURNALISTS ASKED ABOUT THE RELEASE OF THE IMF'S COST ESTIMATES FOR IRAQ'S RECONSTRUCTION, WHETHER THE CPA WAS DOWN TO ITS LAST \$200 MILLION, AND WHAT THE ARAB WORLD SHOULD DO WITH ITS NEW "NEIGHBOR," I.E., THE US. WITH IMF OFFICIALS DEFERRING SUCH QUESTIONS, THE STAGE WAS SET FOR USG AND IRAQI OFFICIALS.

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GETTING THE USG MESSAGE TO THE PRESS  
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¶4. ABU DHABI PAO, APAO, INFORMATION SPECIALIST, AND INFORMATION ASSISTANT SET UP PRESS EVENTS FOR SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY JOHN SNOW, U/S OF STATE FOR ECONOMIC, BUSINESS, AND AGRICULTURAL AFFAIRS ALAN LARSON, AND A LARGE USG CONTINGENT WHILE PROVIDING DAILY MEDIA INFORMATION TO CHAIRMAN OF THE FEDERAL RESERVE BANK ALAN GREENSPAN. AS GOVERNOR AT THE IMF AND WB, SECRETARY SNOW ENGAGED THE PRESS ON MANY OCCASIONS, IN PRESS BRIEFINGS, PRESS AVAILABILITY AFTER MAJOR MEETINGS, PHOTO SPRAYS WITH OTHER OFFICIALS, AND A SIGNING CEREMONY WITH TURKISH OFFICIALS. IN THESE EVENTS, SECRETARY SNOW HIGHLIGHTED US SUPPORT FOR IRAQ AND

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AFGHANISTAN AND DISCUSSED US EFFORTS TO WORK WITH ITS INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS TO IMPROVE THE GLOBAL ECONOMY.

¶5. U/S LARSON REINFORCED SECRETARY SNOW'S COMMENTS BUT FOCUSED ATTENTION ON IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN IN A PRESS BRIEFING AND ABU DHABI TV AND THE WALL STREET JOURNAL INTERVIEWS. U/S LARSON'S PRESS BRIEFING TO THE INTERNATIONAL AND ARAB MEDIA FOCUSED ON THE PRESIDENT'S \$87 BILLION FUNDING REQUEST FOR IRAQ, AFGHANISTAN, AND THE WAR ON TERROR. U/S LARSON ENCOURAGED THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY TO SUPPORT THESE COUNTRIES BY ACCELERATING PLEDGED FUNDS, OFFERING ADDITIONAL PLEDGES, AND RELEASING FROZEN FUNDS. ON THE WAR ON TERROR, U/S LARSON POINTED OUT THAT ARAB AND MUSLIM COUNTRIES LIKE SAUDI ARABIA AND INDONESIA WERE TARGETED AND URGED ALL COUNTRIES TO WORK TOGETHER IN THE WAR ON TERROR.

¶6. IN RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS ON IRAQ'S DECISION TO ALLOW DIRECT FOREIGN INVESTMENT, U/S LARSON REPLIED THAT THE DECISION WAS "DISCUSSED AND DEBATED AT GREAT LENGTH BY THE GOVERNING COUNCIL" AND "EVERY PARAGRAPH AND EVERY SENTENCE OF THE NEW POLICY WAS APPROVED BY THE GOVERNING COUNCIL." AFTER A JOURNALIST CRITICIZED THE USG AND IGC FOR DECIDING

THE FUTURE OF THE IRAQI PEOPLE, U/S LARSON REFUTED THE ASSERTION AND SAID THAT "IT WOULD BE VERY UNWISE TO WAIT AND MAKE NO DECISIONS UNTIL SUCH TIME AS THERE HAVE BEEN ELECTIONS UNDER A NEW CONSTITUTION, BECAUSE THAT WOULD BE THE RECIPE FOR ECONOMIC MALAISE" AND "WOULD HURT THE POLITICAL PROCESS AND THE PROCESS OF RECONSTRUCTION."

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THE IRAQIS STRIKE BACK  
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¶7. U/S LARSON'S COMMENTS CORRESPONDED WITH THE EFFORTS OF THE INTERIM IRAQI CENTRAL BANK GOVERNOR AND MINISTERS OF FINANCE, TRADE, PLANNING, AGRICULTURE, HEALTH, AND EDUCATION TO ENGAGE THE PRESS. TO ACHIEVE THIS GOAL, PA ABU DHABI STAFF ASSISTED IRAQI AND CPA OFFICIALS TO IDENTIFY INTERNATIONAL AND ARAB JOURNALISTS FOR ONE-ON-ONE INTERVIEWS, WORKED WITH IMF STAFF TO PREPARE GENERAL PRESS BRIEFINGS, AND RALLIED THE MEDIA TO SELECT EVENTS.

¶8. THE EFFORT BEGAN WITH A BRIEFING TO IMF/WB DELEGATES AND THE PRESS. CARRIED LIVE, IGC MEMBER DR. MEHDI READ THE IGC'S PLENARY SPEECH TO ROUGHLY 200 DELEGATES AND MEDIA. IN THE SPEECH, THE IGC THANKED COALITION FORCES FOR LIBERATING IRAQ, OUTLINED SADDAM HUSSEIN'S CRIMES, AND CONDEMNED RECENT ACTS OF TERRORISM. THE STATEMENT PROMISED TO "ADOPT DEMOCRACY AND POLITICAL PLURALISM" AND NOTED THAT "WITH POLITICAL FREEDOM, WE SHALL BE ABLE TO FREE OUR ECONOMY." THE IGC FURTHER PLEDGED TO "RESTRUCTURE THE POLICE AND ARMY ON A SOUND BASIS WHICH SERVES THE CITIZENS AND THE COUNTRY," SET OCTOBER 15TH AS THE DATE FOR A UNIFIED CURRENCY, AND ANNOUNCED REFORMS TO ALLOW DIRECT FOREIGN INVESTMENT.

¶9. DURING THE BRIEFING'S Q&A SESSION, THE PRESS CRITICIZED THE ANNOUNCEMENT TO ALLOW DIRECT FOREIGN INVESTMENT AND ASKED WHY THE CPA WOULD MAKE THE DECISION NOW, BEFORE IRAQIS ELECTED A GOVERNMENT. IRAQI OFFICIALS REFUTED THE ASSERTION THAT THE CPA ACTED PREMATURELY AND ILLEGITIMATELY, NOTING THAT THE IGC REPRESENTED ALL RELIGIOUS, ETHNIC, AND TRIBAL GROUPS IN IRAQ. MOST NOTABLY, MINISTER OF PLANNING DR. MEHDI AL HAFEDH RESPONDED "WHY NOT? THE TIME FOR IRAQ'S FUTURE IS NOW!"

¶10. FOLLOWING THIS EVENT, IRAQI AND CPA OFFICIALS WORKED WITH PA STAFF TO IDENTIFY JOURNALISTS FOR EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEWS:

--IGC MEMBER DR. ADIL ABDUL MEHDI: ABU DHABI TV, AL JAZEERA, CNN  
--MINISTER OF TRADE DR. ALI ALLAWI: CNN, ARABIAN BUSINESS, BLOOMBERG, CNBC ARABIYA, DUBAI TV, AL SHARQ AL AWSAT  
--MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE DR. ABDUL AMIR AL ABOOD: DOW JONES, ABU DHABI TV  
--MINISTER OF FINANCE KAMIL AL GAILANI: RADIO SAWA, DUBAI TV, EMIRATES NEWS AGENCY, NY TIMES, ABU DHABI TV, RADIO FREE EUROPE, DUBAI BUSINESS CHANNEL  
--MINISTER OF HEALTH DR. KHIDR ABBAS: DUBAI TV  
--MINISTER OF PLANNING DR. MEHDI AL HAFEDH: REUTERS, AL KHALEEJ  
--MINISTER OF EDUCATION DR. ALADIN ABDUL SAHIB ALWAN: DUBAI TV  
--CENTRAL BANK GOVERNOR DR. SINAN AL SHIBIBI: CNBC ARABIYA, FINANCIAL TIMES, REUTERS

¶11. DURING THE INTERVIEWS, DR. ALLAWI AND DR. SHIBIBI PROVED PARTICULARLY ARTICULATE COMMENTATORS. IN THEIR INTERVIEWS, THEY ASSERTED THAT THE IGC WAS A FULL PARTNER WITH THE CPA, THE DRIVING FORCE IN RECONSTRUCTION, AND COMMITTED TO IRAQ'S FUTURE. IN RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS ON RELATIONS WITH ISRAEL, DR. ALLAWI CALLED THE QUESTION A "RED HERRING" AND POINTED OUT THAT THE IRAQI GOVERNMENT IS "FOCUSED ON THE RECONSTRUCTION OF IRAQ AND A BETTER FUTURE FOR THE IRAQI PEOPLE." THE MINISTERS OF PLANNING AND AGRICULTURE, DR. MEHDI AL HAFEDH AND DR. ABDUL AMIR AL ABOOD ALSO EXPLAINED THE GOALS OF THEIR RESPECTIVE MINISTRIES EFFECTIVELY.

¶12. PA ABU DHABI STAFF ALSO INTRODUCED HAYDAR AHMED, THE

NEW IGC SPOKESPERSON, TO A WIDE RANGE OF MEDIA AT THE IMF/WB CONFERENCE. THE LIST INCLUDED ABU DHABI TV, DUBAI TV, DUBAI BUSINESS CHANNEL, AL ARABIYA, AL SHARQ AL AWSAT, AL HAYAT, AL JAZEERA, AND UAE DAILIES. AS A RESULT, MR. AHMED GAVE INTERVIEWS TO AL JAZEERA AND AL HAYAT TO EXPLAIN THE IGC'S DECISION TO BAN INTERACTION WITH AL JAZEERA AND AL ARABIYA FOR TWO WEEKS.

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A CRITICAL RESPONSE AT A CRITICAL TIME  
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¶13. COMMENT: AT A CRITICAL MOMENT, THE IMF/WB CONFERENCE AFFORDED USG AND IRAQI OFFICIALS A KEY OPPORTUNITY TO BATTLE MISPERCEPTIONS ON AND ELICIT SUPPORT FOR IRAQ'S RECONSTRUCTION. WITH PA ABU DHABI ASSISTANCE, USG AND IRAQI OFFICIALS TACKLED MANY OF THE NEGATIVE MYTHS ABOUNDING IN THE REGION'S PRESS, INCLUDING QUESTIONS ON THE IGC'S LEGITIMACY. THE MEETINGS ALSO PROVIDED IRAQI OFFICIALS A CHANCE TO BUILD CONTACTS WITH THE MEDIA, PARTICULARLY FOR THE NEW IGC SPOKESPERSON. END COMMENT.

WAHBA